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From Guerillas to Peacekeepers: The Evolution of the Rwandan Defense Forces

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## **Executive Summary**

**Title:** From Guerillas to Peacekeepers: The Evolution of the Rwandan Defense Forces

**Author:** Major Robert Beeland Rehder Jr.

**Thesis:** Originating in response to the divisive legacy of colonialism, the Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF) have been shaped by a unique and turbulent history on their way to becoming one of modern Africa's most capable and successful militaries.

**Discussion:** Rwanda, among the smallest countries in Africa, became the first nation in 2004 to deploy peacekeeping forces in support of the Darfur crisis. As of March 2008, there were more than 3,500 Rwandan Soldiers deployed to the Darfur region of Sudan in support of the now joint United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) mission. Unlike some of the military forces that have supported UN and AU efforts, Rwanda's Soldiers have generally reported to peacekeeping commands well equipped, well lead, and well disciplined. For a small, interior country just fourteen years past suffering a four-year revolutionary war that culminated in one of the most shocking genocides in modern history, Rwanda's military progress is striking. Stretching beyond independence from Belgium in 1962, the disruptive subject of Rwandan ethnicity has been a central source of influence in the development of today's Rwandan Defense Forces. Amidst this strife, founders of the RDF institutionalized a form of disciplined and adaptive warfare to rid Rwanda of divisive influence and re-establish the military as a source of protection and pride for the entire country. In recent years, the RDF has developed into a highly capable and respected conventional military that continues to promote social unity and safeguard Rwandan society. Though not without mistakes and criticisms, the unique and proven record of the RDF -as viewed in a military context- demonstrates a proficiency and professional competence placing it among the best of Africa's contemporary armed forces.

**Conclusion:** Rapidly progressing from a heritage of exile, revolution, and genocide, the RDF now represents a uniquely talented, professional military organization, and one of Africa's best resources to resolve conflicts similar to the one it currently faces in Darfur.

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## Preface

I am deeply grateful to all those who guided and supported me in the process of creating this thesis. Above all, I would like to offer my sincere appreciation to my thesis mentor, Professor Paolo Tripodi, whose outstanding instructional talent reinforced my passion for African studies and whose enthusiasm and knowledge encouraged this thesis to be my best possible effort. I am also indebted to my faculty advisors, Lieutenant Colonel Dale Alford, a leader whose poise and insight have inspired me and transformed the way I view my profession, and Professor Craig Swanson, a brilliant instructor, superior historian, and social genius. Many thanks to Major General Donald Gardner, President of Marine Corps University, Colonel Thomas Greenwood, Colonel Mark Wakeman, and Gunnery Sergeant Socorro Moran, Director, Deputy Director, and Administrative Chief respectively of Marine Corps Command and Staff College, and to Brigadier General Thomas Draude and the many employees and supporters of the Marine Corps University Foundation who made my invaluable research visit to Rwanda possible.

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*Rwanda is not defined by a geographical space; it is a state of mind.*

Brigadier General Frank Rusagara, RDF

*That was the hallmark of the RPA: unlike any African army I had seen. They would close hard on their enemies and destroy them. They were on the other hand, relatively gentle victors.*

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas P. Odom, USA (Ret)

## **Introduction**

Through the turbulent political record of Africa's Great Lakes Region, the Rwandan Defense Forces have emerged as a highly effective conventional military organization with a heritage of discipline and professional competence. President Paul Kagame and the army he shaped to become today's RDF have been called many things, but weak and undecided are not common labels. Having conducted personal interviews with current and former members of the RDF and examined much of its history from a culturally appropriate, military perspective, the RDF's record clearly demonstrates a professional military institution with a unique, adaptive, and enduring nature that is quite worthy of examination and discussion in professional military and academic circles. With its complex story, the RDF embodies a successful transition from guerilla army to conventional defense force. Political realities may challenge this feat, but they do not alter the fact that ordinary Rwandan soldiers currently deployed in Sudan are capably leading and executing peacekeeping duties for the international community. For these troops, the political motivations for their involvement are largely a moot point. Of greater relevance to them and this paper, is the expert process by which the RDF infused in them the fundamental proficiency required to independently and

effectively accomplish their assigned mission. Trying to bottle that type of organizational capacity isn't easy; the RDF story is helpful on many levels. It represents timeless lessons in leadership, perseverance, esprit, and professional military ethics. By examining the RDF's unique historical progression, it is my intent to contribute towards a better understanding of the origins and influences of institutional discipline, and the continued value of small unit leadership and mission-oriented tactics.

*Rwanda's Ancient Warrior Heritage* – In an effort to focus on the influences of contemporary history, I have chosen to begin my historical examination around the time of Rwanda's independence from colonial rule. This decision is in no way an attempt to dismiss the rich and influential nature of Rwanda's ancient Kingdoms and colonial struggles; rather, it is a practical attempt to advance the focus of the thesis towards the complicated matters of Rwanda's recent past. Rwanda's monarchical history and the influences that shaped its expansionist warrior culture no doubt form the foundation of modern military consciousness in Rwanda, and those foundations are fittingly credited before analyzing any post-colonial influence.

### **Post-Colonial History of the Rwandan Conflict**

*Independence and the Ethnic Divide* - Post-Colonial transition in sub-Saharan Africa has been a long and wearisome process for the majority of the associated countries. Intoxicated by the wave of independence that swept the continent in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, most populations in these emerging African states were quickly betrayed. Instead of prosperity, sovereignty brought a steady parade of Western powers that secured resource



access through puppet dictators who selfishly sold out their naïve citizens for personal gain. With the purpose of preserving their circumstances over time, many of these dictators learned how to skillfully manipulate long-standing tensions between ethnic groups existing inside their often irrelevant borders. Gaining credibility and marked assistance from alliances with former colonial powers, some African leaders successfully engineered tension among ethnic groups that was previously considered to be insignificant or non-existent. Closely related to this particular condition is the case of Rwanda. Working from the conjecture of ethnic disparity lay by their former Belgian masters, Rwandan leaders before and during early independence consolidated their power by amplifying racial myths and exploiting economic pressures between the majority Hutu and minority Tutsi ethnic groups. This tension accounted for thousands of Rwandans being killed or forced into refugee status in neighboring countries. Almost twelve years after Grégoire Kayibanda firmly established Hutu rule as Rwanda's first official post-colonial president, Juvenal Habyarimana ousted him in a coup. Habyarimana enjoyed vast French support as he created a despotic regime that effectively isolated Rwanda's remaining Tutsi population and the various Hutu parties who opposed him.<sup>1</sup>

*Hutu Extremism, the RPA, and the Revolution* - With favorable prices on its key coffee and tea exports and France backing its rigid Hutu government, Rwanda enjoyed a fairly peaceful and prosperous period during Habyarimana's first decade in power. However, economic problems and growing human rights criticism in the late 1980s provided opposition and exile groups the opportunity to increase pressure on Habyarimana's rule. The Hutu President responded by proposing limited political and expatriate reforms.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, Tutsi and some Hutu leaders had by this time organized their considerable Diaspora under one political party known as the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The armed wing behind The RPF was the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA). Rwandan exiles in Uganda, most RPA soldiers began their military careers in the mid 1980s supporting Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) during his successful guerilla war against Ugandan President Milton Obote. For their skill and effort, President Museveni appointed several of these Rwandans to prominent positions within the NRA. Among those appointed were two exceptional Tutsi officers named Fred Rwigyema and Paul Kagame. Both had been with Museveni from the earliest days of the guerilla struggle and as the political situation in Rwanda destabilized in the late 1980s, they used their positions to covertly organize most of the Rwandan exiles serving in the NRA under the RPA banner. In October 1990, with Habyarimana's position sufficiently weakened and mounting refugee pressure in Uganda, Rwigyema initiated the RPA's defection from the Ugandan Army and attacked south into Rwanda.<sup>3</sup> After Rwigyema's untimely death on the second day of the invasion, and France's mobilization to preserve Habyarimana's Hutu government, Kagame assumed command of the RPA and coordinated a four-year guerilla campaign that witnessed an immeasurable genocide and culminated in the RPF's complete control of Rwanda.

*RPA becomes RDF, from the Congo to Sudan* - Following the turmoil of 1994, the RPA steadily consolidated its control over most of Rwanda. However, ex-RGF rebels who fled to eastern Zaire under the protection of President Mobutu Sese Seko, soon began a series of armed attacks into Rwanda that provoked two divergent invasions of Zaire by the RPA

in 1996 and 1998. By the final withdrawal of RPA forces in 2002, the conflicts had resulted in Mobutu's ouster, his successor's assassination, and the RPA's questionable, but impressive occupation of immense areas of Zaire, now renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Following the conflict in DRC, the RPA went through a period of demobilization and specialization that focused on professionalization and development of proficiency in areas of border security and peacekeeping. This successful transition led to the creation of the Rwanda Defense Forces, who today enjoy the reputation of a first-rate, expert African military. With a pioneering deployment of 150 peacekeepers to Sudan's Darfur region in 2004, and more than 3500 Rwandan soldiers currently supporting the joint African Union-United Nations mandate in Sudan, the RDF's enduring prominence among African militaries appears certain.

### **Origins of Professional Discipline**

#### *Uganda and the National Resistance Army*

To understand the organizational behavior of Rwanda's current military, it is helpful to first examine the origins of the RPA and the significant Ugandan influences that shaped its foundation. Of the thousands of Rwandans that fled the country in the troubled years surrounding its independence, many settled on refugee camps and small farms in Western Uganda.<sup>4</sup> For thirty years the refugees remained, but just as in Rwanda, they frequently found themselves the convenient targets of various political groups and tyrants. Blocked by autocratic rule from returning home and facing growing persecution in Uganda, many refugees conducted armed attacks into Rwanda that paradoxically provoked Kigali and produced additional flight. Other refugees confused the issue further by forming botched

alliances with various Ugandan political movements or figures. As a result of these circumstances, Rwandan refugees generally endured a reputation of mistrust in Uganda.<sup>5</sup> However, the Tutsi relationship with Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) did prove to be very productive.

By the time Museveni and his NRA launched their first insurgent attack against the government of Milton Obote in the early 1980s, he had distinguished himself from the typical African freedom fighter. Museveni was an educated reformist who had railed against the oppression produced by western-style imposed democracy in post-colonial Africa. A product of East African socialist influences, Museveni was determined to establish an economically secure government in Uganda that was free of oppressive foreign meddling and capable of independent growth and development.<sup>6</sup> The collectivist ideology of the NRA, which emphasized general solidarity over tribal or ethnic associations, offered an attractive sanctuary for oft-targeted Rwandan Tutsi refugees in search of a security.<sup>7</sup> In addition, Museveni's philosophy greatly influenced the thinking of more educated and ambitious Rwandan refugees like Fred Rwigyema and Paul Kagame. Colin Waugh states:

This experiment in inclusive popular government against the backdrop of fighting a war of resistance which Museveni conducted undoubtedly shaped the thinking of his military lieutenants and in particular the young Rwandan officers at his side who were now cutting their political as well as military teeth. Paul Kagame and Fred Rwigyema would draw strongly on the thought leadership of Yoweri Museveni...<sup>8</sup>

Kagame, Rwanda's current President, fled to Uganda with his family in 1959. Growing up in the same refugee camp with Rwigyema, Kagame developed into a highly intelligent and aggressive advocate of repatriation. Gen. Roméo Dallaire, the commander of the

United Nations military forces in Rwanda in 1994 would later say of Kagame: 'He is absolutely brilliant.' 'He has an exceptionally disciplined mind.'<sup>9</sup>

With Kagame and Rwigyema at his side, Museveni's NRA matured rapidly into a well-organized and disciplined enterprise. Understanding that sustainable victory depended on the popular support of the Ugandan people, Museveni established a strict code of conduct for his army that encouraged personal responsibility and shaped their moral and ethical character in and out of combat. In the NRA, educated and ignorant alike were held to the same standards, and the tremendous value placed on positive example insured that promotion was highly significant and 'depended solely on capacity, commitment, and contribution to the struggle.'<sup>10</sup> Such was the example that would later form the foundation of discipline in the RPA.

With a skillfully executed guerilla campaign, the NRA toppled the last of Ugandan President Milton Obote's forces in 1986 and established Museveni as the new president and minister of defense. For their faithful reliability, Rwandans Rwigyema and Kagame were awarded key positions as the deputy minister of defense and head of military intelligence respectively. Despite these appointments, Rwigyema, Kagame, and other Rwandan exiles that had served Museveni's NRA so well, were once again becoming targets of political attack. Because so many Rwandans had joined the NRA early in the struggle, their troop, experience, and skill levels were much higher than those of native Ugandan soldiers. This paradox proved to be a huge political liability for Museveni who had little choice but to enact promotion reforms in the military that favored decent over more relevant qualifications.<sup>11</sup> It was at this time that Rwigyema,

Kagame, and other prominent Tutsi exiles realized that their worthy sacrifices would not guarantee them integration in Ugandan society.

Increasingly unwelcome in Uganda and restricted from repatriation in Rwanda, exile leaders across the Diaspora restructured their political efforts in 1987 to form the Rwandan Patriotic Front and 'crystallize two points of consensus:' that home for the refugees meant an armed return to Rwanda itself, and that the struggle would be lead by Rwandan exiles from the NRA.<sup>12</sup> Taking a low profile approach, Rwigyema and Kagame began recruiting the Rwandan Patriotic Army from within the exile ranks of the NRA. With few exceptions, Rwigyema and Kagame exercised strict control over RPA business and skillfully developed its capacity for independent operations against Habyarimana's Rwandese Government Forces (RGF)<sup>13</sup>. Despite widely held suspicions of an invasion plot, the political world was amply surprised on 1 October 1990, when an estimated 2000-4000 RPA soldiers slipped away from their NRA posts and followed Rwigyema south across the border into Rwanda. Many credit President Museveni with screening the RPA action, but operational surprise was a more likely result of the tight discipline and well-developed chain of command that Rwandan soldiers had honed over their years of fighting war and enduring persecution in Uganda's NRA.<sup>14</sup> Interpretations of the circumstances surrounding the invasion vary greatly, but many scholars agree that for the RPA, residency itself depended entirely on the eventual success of the invasion:

...There would be no return to Uganda, no possibility that any of [the RPA] could define Uganda as home. When the [RPA] crossed the Uganda-Rwanda border in October 1990, this did not only constitute an armed invasion of Rwanda; it was also an armed repatriation of refugees from Uganda.<sup>15</sup>

This uncompromising condition would serve as a powerful reinforcement for the already noteworthy discipline of the RPA and motivate its soldiers through the long struggle that lay ahead.

### *Kagame and the Mountains*

From the beginning, the October invasion did not proceed well. The death of Fred Rwigyema and other key leaders in the early fighting amplified the significant, but common friction any force might experience as a result of opening actions. Although their individual skill and experience far outmatched that of their opponents, the invasion force's light armament and conventional posture gave the native and better equipped RGF a distinct advantage on their 'home' ground. Within weeks, the RGF - with significant military assistance from France, as well as Belgium and Zaire - had succeeded in stopping the RPA's advance and splintering its forces across northwest Rwanda.<sup>16</sup>

Selected to attend the U. S. Army's Command & General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth Kansas, Paul Kagame was absent at the outset of the invasion. In, November 1990, however, Kagame abruptly withdrew from school and returned to Uganda to make his way to the front. Once in Rwanda he quickly rallied the remaining RPA forces, re-organized them into smaller, more mobile units, and began employing these units in a more unconventional "hit and run" style. During this time Kagame also shifted the RPA's base of operations to the relative safety of the mountainous Akagera and Virunga regions of the Northeast and Northwest parts of the country. The inaccessibility of these areas provided freedom of movement and defendable sanctuary, but with little food and light clothing, the unforgiving cold and rain of these altitudes

proved miserable for all and deadly for some. Despite the harsh conditions, now Major-General Kagame immediately set to work recruiting, restructuring, and re-supplying his tattered army. It was during this critical period that two defining events occurred within the organization: Kagame invested the already focused group with a unique ethos, and he attracted an influx of intelligent recruits that literally made the RPA a lot smarter.

As discussed, the RPA's Ugandan legacy shaped it into a closely controlled organization. However, during his first crucial months in command of the RPA, Kagame conveyed a command philosophy and leadership style that had extraordinary, immediate, and enduring effects. With the specific aim of impressing the value of 'collective responsibility' upon his soldiers, Kagame's influence during the bitter months following the October Invasion inspired his weakened army. In doing so, Kagame eternally shaped the RPA into a culture of discipline that Prunier described as 'an extremely tight ship, where soldiers stood at attention, saluted their officers, and strictly obeyed orders.'<sup>17</sup> The New York Times reported:

At a time when codes were a rarity for revolutionary armies and indeed for regular armies in Africa, Kagame set out specific penalties for such things as failing to carry out an assignment, drinking on duty and stealing, as well as for abuses of civilians. It was enforced not just against low-ranking soldiers, but against officers as well.<sup>18</sup>

This collective responsibility was the cornerstone of Kagame's military philosophy. In a 1996 interview, Kagame explained his strategy for taking command:

In all my capacities – in the RPF, in the government, in the army – my primary responsibility is to help develop people who can take responsibility *indiscriminately*...in the RPF we have tried to encourage collective responsibility. I'm not saying there aren't power struggles. But things were deliberately organized in such a way that one can play a very prominent role – be very useful, lead people, be respected, and so on – but at the end of the day, there is an emphasis on collective responsibility, on discussion.<sup>19</sup>

The issue of discussion would become central to the RPA's success. RPA officers were strictly held accountable for the overall performance of their units. They were expected



to know their people, and more importantly, to care about them. In return, RPA soldiers were expected to trust their officers and to provide them with an unwavering commitment to victory. The practical result of this fraternity was the RPA's well-developed practice of consensus-based decision-making. Through formalized, open discussions that usually took place at dawn, RPA officers at all levels of command entertained the opinions and experiences of soldiers across all ranks before making important decisions.<sup>20</sup> This institutional exchange fostered an extraordinary ethos of responsibility in the RPA and promoted a close and powerful bond between its officers and their men. The bond created would lead to tremendous operational success for RPA field units and would eventually lay the foundation for the "Council of Colonels" that advised Kagame himself.<sup>21</sup>

The second defining event that occurred during this period involved the exceptional skill and intelligence of the many recruits who joined the RPA's ranks during the early days of the war. With many of these recruits coming from the global Rwandan Diaspora, the RPA rapidly enjoyed an unusually high average standard of education and cultural expertise. With nearly all soldiers educated at the primary level, 50% at secondary, and upwards of 20% receiving university level instruction, the RPA represented what Prunier described as 'probably the best educated guerilla force the world had ever seen.'<sup>22</sup> Although many of these new recruits possessed limited military experience, their sharp minds had little trouble understanding the socio-political stakes of the insurgent guerilla campaign Kagame was constructing. In forsaking the early invasion's conventional strategy, Kagame sought to capitalize on the vast guerilla experience the RPA had gained in Uganda, while still leveraging the collective

intellectual talents of its newest members. The shift would eventually enhance the RPA's operational effectiveness in a conflict that increasingly relied on sound political, economic, and informational strategy over that of military action alone. Ironically, the effects of this transition were felt immediately in Habyarimana's government. Because the mountain sanctuaries were also home to famous gorillas and other popular wildlife, the RPA's very presence in Akagera and Virunga effectively destroyed Rwanda's budding tourism industry and crippled one of the country's principal foreign exchange earners.<sup>23</sup>

The restructuring period was also a crucial time for assembling the supplies and equipment required to sustain the protracted guerilla war being planned. Although not openly welcome back in Uganda, the RPA did enjoy covert medical and logistical support from their former NRA brothers to the North. Researchers have noted that the RPA was only able to preserve this critical, but politically awkward supply line by operating in a highly disciplined and discrete manner.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, Kagame took full advantage of the Diaspora's generosity to improve his army's overall financial situation. Even so, the RPA was far from wealthy, and the prudent financial management they demonstrated during this formative period proved vital to their survival. The RPA's frugal practices also further distinguished it from other rebel armies of the period. As one scholar noted:

Contrary to what had happened in several African guerilla organizations where leaders routinely used the movement's money for their private ends, there were never any rumors of financial misappropriation in the RP[A].<sup>25</sup>

The financial discipline demonstrated during this period complemented the RPA's overall professional reputation. As the army progressed through the war and peace that lay

ahead, it prioritized its budget by forsaking expensive equipment and consistently investing its limited resources into supporting and training its most valuable asset - people.<sup>26</sup>

After two months in the mountains, Kagame had successfully reinforced the RPA and re-shaped their tactical and spiritual focus for an offensive guerilla campaign against the RGF; one that would establish the RPA as a credible opposition force and give the RPF legitimate bargaining power in Rwandan politics.

### *Protracted Guerilla War*

As a point of clarification, scholars generally disagree on the naming conventions relating to the four-year conflict between the RPA and the RGF. Because the RPA deserted and invaded from a foreign state, many scholars rebuff the term civil war. The term insurgency is also discouraged due to the fact that RPA was a 'foreign' army and that its advances generally resulted in the exodus of civilian communities it might have gained support from. Instead, the RPA largely fought the conflict in the "physical and intellectual vacuum...appearing not as an insurgent group from within (which it was not) but as a foreign army trying to get in."<sup>27</sup>

In January 1991, the re-organized RPA launched the first of three major guerilla offensives against RGF forces under Habyarimana's control. After successful operations in 1991 and 1992, the RPA effectively controlled Habyarimana's home region and political base in Northern Rwanda, and more importantly they controlled Rwanda's vital transportation routes to the sea.<sup>28</sup> The Tutsi minority remaining in the country paid a terrible price for every RPF success. With calculated aggression, Habyarimana's regime

deliberately timed the slaughter of Tutsi civilians to follow turning points in the RPA's advance.<sup>29</sup> These systematic killings served as a consistent reminder to the RPA that compromise in Habyarimana's Rwanda could only be achieved through force, but they also demonstrated that forced compromise would come at a cost in civilian lives.

By 1993 the resolute RPA's military strengths, capabilities, and campaign successes had become an unquestionable threat to Habyarimana's weakening regime. Beset by international political pressure and an economic crisis aggravated by the conflict, the president reluctantly signed comprehensive power-sharing accords that afforded the RPF equal participation in a new democratic government.<sup>30</sup> On paper, the RPA had succeeded in their ultimate goal of securing a home for themselves and the thousands of Rwandan refugees and exiles they represented around the world. In practice, however, the accords - signed in August 1993 in Arusha, Tanzania - produced little more positive action on the part of Habyarimana's government than two previous cease-fire agreements signed in 1991 and 1992.<sup>31</sup> For Habyarimana's regime, the reforms of Arusha represented a virtual coup that threatened their individual and collective prosperity and exposed them to judgment for crimes committed during decades of uncontested power.<sup>32</sup> Most scholars agree that it was at this point Habyarimana and his extremist alliance, known as *akazu* (little house), abandoned their political labors and focused the majority of their efforts on preparations for defeating their opposition through more practical means ...extermination.<sup>33</sup> Martin Meredith describes the *akazu* reaction following the signing of the final Arusha accords in 1993:

During the negotiations in Arusha a senior RPF official encountered Colonel Théoneste Bagosora, a leading member of the *akazu*, standing in a hotel [elevator] surrounded by suitcases. Asked why he was leaving, Bagosora replied that he was going back to Rwanda to prepare 'apocalypse deux' - the second apocalypse.<sup>34</sup>

It was in this virulent atmosphere of mutual distrust that Kagame and the RPA first attempted to facilitate the RPF's integration into Rwandan politics.

Among its many failures, Arusha mandated the deployment of United Nations peacekeeping forces in Rwanda to 'facilitate the cease-fire and the political integration of the warring factions.'<sup>35</sup> The United Nations Assistance Mission In Rwanda (UNAMIR) - deployed in November 1993 - was the world community's pitifully appropriate contribution to the flawed and insincere foundation that supported the Arusha Accords. As early as January 1994, the modest means and mandate of UNAMIR were judged even by its own officers to be ineffective.<sup>36</sup> Without a credible peace broker in place, the RPA was again in the familiar position of having to depend on its own strength to guarantee RPF integration outlined in the agreement. By April of 1994, however, it had become clear that despite international pressure towards implementation of the power-sharing accords, Habyarimana's regime had no genuine intention of 'sharing' anything with the RPF. Faced with mounting evidence of a systematic *akazu* plan to massacre Rwanda's Tutsi and moderate Hutu populations, the RPA regained its war footing and prepared for renewed combat.<sup>37</sup>

### *Genocide Leads to Absolute Victory*

On April 6<sup>th</sup> 1994, President Habyarimana's plane was unaccountably shot down as he was returning from an implementation summit in Tanzania. News of the assassination rapidly triggered the beginning of Rwanda's genocide. After seizing effective control of the government and the RGF, ultra-extremist members of the *akazu* under RGF Colonel Théoneste Bagosora implemented an extermination campaign that 'would restore the

solidarity of the Hutu under [extremist] leadership and help them win the war [against the RPA], or at least improve their chances of winning a favorable peace.<sup>38</sup> Past the mere actuality of massacre that followed Habyarimana's assassination was the reality that the unfolding genocide was politically organized and holistic in nature. Through its control of elite Para-Commando, Reconnaissance, and Presidential Guard units, Bagosora's extremist element had quickly terminated its political opposition and begun managing the methodical slaughter of Rwanda's Tutsi population. This realization placed critical pressure on the RPA's response, eventually producing an outcome that proved to be monumental in shaping the RPA's future character. As I have mentioned previously, Kagame and his army were already resolved to the fact that membership in Rwandan politics ultimately depended on their capacity to influence events militarily. But, Bagosora's absolutist strategy and the UN's impotence now meant that survival itself depended on the RPA's capacity to supplant the political process altogether. After two days of unsuccessfully supporting UNAMIR efforts to restore order through cooperative military diplomacy,<sup>39</sup> Kagame definitively abandoned diplomatic efforts and reinvested the full weight of the RPA towards an absolute military victory.

From the start, the RPA skillfully executed its campaign plan. With a three-pronged attack south that originated from the Northeast, center, and northwest of the country, the RPA succeeded in fixing large elements of the RGF on the flanks while it massed its combat power in the center for a calculated assault on Kigali.<sup>40</sup> General Roméo Delleaire, UNAMIR's military commander, described Kagame's campaign:

[Kagame] had begun a more deliberate operation of encirclement and reduction of the defending forces. He was not the least bit intimidated by the Presidential Guard, artillery and armoured units, civil defence forces and militia who were determined to defend the capital. He believed that they did not have the discipline required to fight a clever and determined foe and that they were wasting their resources on killing civilians instead of

concentrating their efforts on defence. From the first, [Kagame] focused on what he saw was the main task: defeating the RGF in the field.<sup>41</sup>

Many critics have condemned the RPA for diverting its combat power on the RGF instead of exclusively using it to halt ongoing massacres inside the country. Although this conclusive judgment is effortlessly passed today, it might not have been at the time. It is plausible that the RPA's objective strategy was such in 1994, due to the overwhelmingly poor prospects for lasting compromise that existed during the period. RPA actions in June 1994 clearly demonstrated an economy of force strategy that balanced tactical control against full-scale genocide intervention,<sup>42</sup> but by doing so, the RPA preserved its combat power and pressed a perceived opportunity for a total military victory that would halt the killing altogether. While the collateral impact of the RPA's dilemma was no less tragic and regrettable, judged from Kagame's situational, military perspective, the strategy does bear reason.

It is important to examine how French military intervention influenced the RPA's tactical decisions in 1994. The vision of African autonomy Kagame had formed in the early 1980s made him suspicious and intolerant of foreign interference in African politics; especially French efforts in Rwanda. French intervention during the invasion in 1990 had helped to stall the RPA's initial advance, and French military aid to the regime since that time had greatly strengthened the RGF.<sup>43</sup> Paris had many reasons for deploying forces to Rwanda, but chief among these in Kagame's mind was its interest in preserving French influence in the region. Although sold as a humanitarian mission, the French interventionist strategy in 1994 - a formidable air-ground task force known as *Operation Turquoise* - was freely based on preventing the RPA from total victory, while salvaging the Hutu regime they had backed since Rwanda's independence.<sup>44</sup> Yet, by

taking the airport in Kigali in May 1994, the RPA effectively denied the French military its best opportunity to directly reinforce the RGF at a time and place where it would have been most favorable. Consequently, by the time French troops finally crossed into Southeast Rwanda over land from Zaire in June 1994, Kagame and the RPA were ready. Demonstrating proficiency in maneuver, speed, and surprise, the RPA quickly stymied any French ideas of expanding the Turquoise mission.<sup>45</sup> Kagame's unyielding campaign plan, and the RPA's skilled execution, quickly gave his guerilla army a tactical advantage over the French task force that politicians in Paris weren't willing to overcome by force.<sup>46</sup>

After finally securing Kigali on 4 July and defeating the last regime strongholds by the 18th, the RPA claimed a victorious conclusion to the four-year war. Having defeated the government forces outright, the RPA had placed its political wing in a position to independently and definitively manage Rwanda's ethnic divide and the perceived foreign meddling that had created it. Furthermore, the absolute and autonomous nature of the RPA victory generated tremendous organizational pride that polarized its self-sufficing transition from guerilla army to conventional military.

## **Professional Transition**

### *Less than Perfect at Kibeho*

Hamstrung by their political mandate and the crafty fieldwork of the RPA, French forces established zone turquoise in the Southwest region of Rwanda in late June. Under the protection of the 2,500 man French air-ground task force *Turquoise*, some 250,000 internally displaced Rwandans, many of them ex-RGF and genocidal militias set up camp and slowly began re-organizing their efforts.<sup>47</sup> Ironically, the international community



who had been so slow to recognize and respond to the genocide was now more than capable of providing aid and comfort to most of the people who had carried it out. This irony did not sit well with the RPF, who after the French withdrawal in the August of 1994, began to pressure UNAMIR and the international community to conclude support efforts in the remaining Humanitarian Protection Zone (HPZ). The RPF wanted UNAMIR and the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) supporting the camps to encourage Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) to begin returning to their home communes. Motivations were plenty, but from a military perspective, the RPA was growing impatient with the large number of armed raids being carried out by genocidal forces that harbored in the IDP camps.<sup>48</sup> Pressure succeeded in closing most of these camps, but a result was that many of the extremist forces from the folding camps consolidated at the few that remained open. This circumstance set the stage for an unfortunate clash at the largest remaining camp in the Southwest Rwandan town of Kibeho.

The massacre at the Kibeho camp in April 1995 is attributed to a series of unhelpful influences such as UN/NGO bureaucracy and poor weather, but it primarily highlights a lack of composure on the part of the RPA. The facts of the Kibeho massacre in which an estimated 1500 to 2000<sup>49</sup> IDPs lost their lives demonstrated uncharacteristic on the part of the RPA and reflected the frustration and friction the army was experiencing as it rapidly expanded and transitioned from insurgent to counterinsurgent warfare. The RPA units operating in the vicinity of the Kibeho camp before the massacre were routinely subjected to hostile fire and like actions from its inhabitants, and absent effective leadership to temper their anger, the RPA soldiers were vulnerable to retaliatory

behavior.<sup>50</sup> Understandably unwilling to wait for UNAMIR to effectively close the camp, the RPA decision to lay siege to Kibeho on 18 April created a rapidly deteriorating situation in which IDPs were tightly cordoned for four days while waiting for transportation home. Knowing that the RPA would arrest them upon out-processing from the camp, extremists among the crowd of about 80,000, terrorized innocent IDPs into breaking out from the camp in order to shield their own escape.<sup>51</sup> Although many extremists were rightfully killed in the violence, the local RPA commander ultimately mismanaged the situation and allowed his unit to play a regrettable role in the deaths of hundreds of non-combatants. Although the Kibeho incident was ruled by competent authority to be an unplanned, but avoidable mistake, its fallout damaged the credibility of the budding RPF government and more importantly to this paper; it needlessly tarnished the disciplined name of the RPA. Just the same, multiple scholars and observers agree that Kibeho and similar incidents were isolated events that were not designed as part of a revenge campaign by RPA leadership and did not define the overall professional character of the RPA.<sup>52</sup> These incidents are representative of ethical failures that have plagued many field armies in history; armies who have abandoned restraint when faced with a brazen and increasingly nebulous enemy.

### *Integrating the Former Enemy*

Mere months after securing the country in July of 1994, the RPA began a military integration program that once again demonstrated the organization's intellect.

Understanding that the divisive impact of the genocide and the independent manner in which the RPA had secured victory would quickly erode the RPA's legitimacy, Kagame

and the RPA quickly adopted a plan to integrate members of the ex-RGF. Following the principle of consensus that had brought the RPA so many successes on the battlefield, a re-education and training program commenced in the fall of 1994 at the Gako integration center south of Kigali.<sup>53</sup> At this camp, ex-RGF officers who had been vetted against participation in the Genocide were paired with an RPA counterpart and exposed to the positive aspects that had brought the RPA so much success. One ex-RGF officer described the integration process as fairly simple due to the fact that everyone involved shared a common history, language (Kinyarwanda), and nationality. He regretted that the Habyarimana government had used divisive politics and acknowledged that the RGF had suffered on the battlefield due to the understanding that soldiers in the RGF were treated as an expendable resource by the former government. In contrast, the officer - now a Major in the RDF - outlined the strength of the RDF as an organization that values its people above all else.<sup>54</sup> Brigadier General Frank Rusagara, the current director of the RDF history division in Kigali characterized the success of the integration process as quite logical when viewed in the context of Rwanda's military legacy. He explains:

...the military was a national institution that guaranteed not only internal security, but guarded against external aggression. This was because the military was part and parcel of the society that produced it. In its turn, the military acted as the cohesive force in the community. Towards this end, the society's values, customs and taboos were enshrined and codified into *Imigenzo n'imizilirizo* (dos and don'ts), which in military terms were actualized in how one conducted himself or herself in times of war and peace.<sup>55</sup>

With an appreciation of the unifying role played by Rwanda's military throughout its history, and the negative and divisive impact that Habyarimana's regime had on Rwandan society, it is not difficult to see why former enemies would be willing to re-unite. Again, General Rusagara explains:

...integration through the *Ingandos* (traditional Rwandan military camps) entailed refocusing the individual from being a manipulated tool of negative forces into an

*imfura y' i Rwanda* (from a genocidaire to being an agent of social change and development) actualizing the ideals of a patriotic Rwandan. With this transformation, the RPA has been able to mediate the various conflicts that characterized the deconstruction of pre-genocide Rwanda.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, the integration program's fundamental premise was that the RPA should be a national institution, which had a place for any Rwandan soldier who was willing to forsake the divisive politics of the past and embrace Rwandan unity. Eventually, more than 15,000 of an estimated 40,000 former RGF soldiers were integrated into the RPA.<sup>57</sup> The newly integrated RPA would cement its solidarity and comradeship under fire in the coming Congo wars, and use their shared experiences to demystify perceived animosities among the society as a whole.<sup>58</sup>

#### *Experience Gained in the Congo*

The circumstances and motivations affecting the conflict in the Congo from 1996-2002 are extensive. For that matter I will attempt to remain within the parameters of the thesis by focusing on the military aspects of the conflict and in particular, the RPA's role in it. By 1996, the close to one million Hutu refugees including ex-FAR and genocidal militia were living across Rwanda's western border in Zaire. With no UN/NGO effort to disarm the military and militia members in the camps, and no legitimate authority to properly manage access to millions of dollars worth of aid from various international relief organizations, the Hutu extremists among the refugees quickly re-established their political leadership and re-organized their military structures. Rapidly gaining strength from this aid and millions more from President Mobutu himself, the refugee army soon swelled to a level above 50,000 and began organized attacks against Tutsi populations in Eastern Zaire and into Rwanda itself.<sup>59</sup> Despite repeated appeals and warnings from

Kagame (then Vice-President of Rwanda) to the international community to disarm and disband the camps, nothing was done. In September 1996, when attacks intensified, the RPA launched a counterinsurgency offensive in Zaire and supported the rebel opposition army of Laurent Kabila dubbed *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Congo-Zaïre* (AFDL). The combined force quickly moved on the camps. Kagame's justification for the invasion was threefold: to protect Tutsi populations across both borders, to defeat the refugee army/ close the camps/ and send the refugees home to Rwanda, and to oust the decayed Mobutu from power.<sup>60</sup>

The tactics employed during the 1996 invasion were by this time trademark to the RPA: envelope and encircle an objective area, leave an avenue of retreat open towards a desired destination, and control all movement in and out. Once the cordon was in place, refugees were notified that the camps were to be closed and that all residents were to move back to Rwanda. In an unfortunately similar scenario to the closing of camps inside Rwanda two years earlier, many refugees in the Zairian camps were subject to the deadly control of the armed extremists. When the extremists finally broke from the protection of the massed refugees and fled west into Zaire in November 1996, they terrorized and coerced thousands more refugees into accompanying them and covering their escape. RPA/AFDL forces tracked these fleeing hordes ruthlessly. In the process, the extremist army was largely destroyed and by May 1997, the invaders had succeeded in toppling Mobutu's forces and establishing a new government (DRC) in Kinshasa under Kabila.

Upon Kabila's inauguration on 17 May 1997, the RPA had accomplished all three of Kagame's objectives for the invasion. Peace, however, did not last long. Due to the

fact that tiny Rwanda had supported Kabila's rebellion and had made the most of their newfound access to the resources of Eastern DRC, Kabila found it increasingly difficult to remain allied with Kigali and still maintain political legitimacy among the indigenous Congolese population.<sup>61</sup> Accused of being a Rwandan puppet and faced with mounting coups threats from within, Kabila soon expelled Rwandan officials from his government and eventually supported remaining ex-RGF and Militia force operations against Rwandan interests. Entirely displeased with this outcome, Kagame sent the RPA back into DRC in force in July 1998. Joined by units from Uganda and Burundi, RPA units moved swiftly and decisively to secure eastern DRC. However, Angola and Zimbabwe quickly deployed their own troops to check the RPA advance and protect Kabila's government in Kinshasa. The conflict quickly evolved into what scholars have called Africa's World War, eventually involving forces from DRC, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Chad, Sudan, Uganda, Burundi, and Rwanda.<sup>62</sup> By September 1998, opposing forces had settled behind a front situated along a Northwest to Southeast diagonal. Although the conflict continued until the Lusaka Peace Treaty of July 2002 shepherded an RPA withdrawal from DRC, the remaining fighting was mostly sporadic.

Tactically, the Congo wars once again highlighted the military skill of the RPA, especially with regard to command and control. At the height of the conflict in 1999-2000, the RPA effectively administered territory inside the Congo roughly the size of Texas.<sup>63</sup> For an army from a country the size of Maryland, the ability to exercise effective control over such an immense area further highlighted the RPA's excellent command and control capability and demonstrated its overall ability to project and sustain expeditionary forces.<sup>64</sup> The conflict also provided the army with an opportunity

to unite the efforts of RPA veterans with newly integrated ex-RGF soldiers. As General Rusagara states, the Congo Wars provided “a conducive environment for further bonding among the integrated forces serving a common cause for Rwanda. It also reinforced their sense of patriotism and nationalism. Moreover, the conflict represented active politicization and socialization that enhanced RPA bonding through practicing the theories they learnt from the *ingando* (integration camps)”<sup>65</sup>

Politically, however, the expedition opened the RPF and the RPA up to yet another round of criticism from the international community. In particular, critics have implicated the RPA for the active and passive role it played in the deaths of thousands of non-combatants in DRC due to hostile fire, starvation, and disease. In an unfortunate replay of previous tragedies at places like Kibeho, RPA forces were accused of using indiscriminate force in an effort to wipe out remaining extremist elements threatening Rwanda’s fragile new government. When discussing these issues with current members of the RDF, they tend to acknowledge that atrocities occurred, but requested that the incidents be judged independently and in the context of the historical threat posed at the time by genocidal forces continuing to menace Rwandan unity.<sup>66</sup> In addition, the RPA’s active participation in the exploitation of resources from the territory it controlled in Northeast DRC has brought condemnation from the international community. UN reports have stated that “the exploitation of resources was systematic and systemic, involving networks of government officials, military officers, and military owned companies from, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Congo with the involvement of European and American businessmen and companies.”<sup>67</sup> Despite the many contextual and practical justifications that exist to defend many of these actions, the fact remains

that the RPA played a leading role in a conflict that ultimately deprived the Congolese people of their rightful property and in millions of cases, their lives. RPA soldiers understood and accepted these political consequences and returned to Rwanda committed to re-shaping their force and their efforts towards progress. The product of that endeavor would be a smaller, more versatile, and more professionally mature force known as the RDF.

### *Downsizing, Transition, and Professionalization*

The RPA has experienced three demobilization periods in its history. The first discharges involved many of the estimated 20,000 recruits that were rapidly absorbed during the genocide. Most of these soldiers were genocide survivors (many of them children) who had flocked to the RPA for protection or vengeance. Because they had not been with the movement when it formed in Uganda or during the insurgency, many of these newer recruits lacked the purpose and disciplined focus of the core veterans. Military observers have noted that these rear echelon recruits, with their lack of exposure and organizational experience, represented the members of the RPA most vulnerable to committing revenge killings and other atrocities.<sup>68</sup> General Dallaire stated, "I believe Kagame tried his best to control his new recruits who were lusting for revenge ...unfortunately we could not ignore the reports received of revenge murders, looting and rape, as undisciplined rear elements of the RP[A] and returnees sought their own retribution." Although many of these soldiers were demobilized, the number of newly integrated ex-RGF soldiers and professionally trained recruits that took their places meant that the RPA did not experience much net loss in manpower during the immediate post-war period.



The second demobilization effort began during the first Congo war in 1996-1997 and continued after the Lusaka Peace treaty effectively ended the second Congo war in July 2002. This demobilization effort was formally administered by a World Bank funded government project known as the Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC).<sup>69</sup> The first to be demobilized by the RDRC during the first Congo war included some 2,600 child soldiers known as *Kadogos*. Thousands followed each year with the largest single exodus of 11,166 occurring after Lusaka in 2002. In total, an estimated 30,000 soldiers were demobilized from the RPA between 1996 and 2002.<sup>70</sup>

As the Rwandan state moved ahead with serious attempts to stabilize society and develop its economy, the RPA began an enthusiastic effort to formalize its practices, specialize its force, and devote its resources towards protecting the fragile peace. Officers who understood the unifying force Rwanda's military had played in her past knew that the RPA had to reinvent itself as an example of progress and social change. Their vision resulted in a plan to institutionalize the RPA as "an instrument for social reconstruction, cohesion and conflict management."<sup>71</sup> In a significant demonstration of that effort, the RPA formally changed its name to the RDF in June 2002. Understanding that success depended on a more professional and mature force, the RDF actively sought opportunities to improve the professional competency of its officers and its operational units. RDF officers began regularly attending professional military colleges in Kenya, Zambia, South Africa, Europe, and the United States. In addition, the Kenyan army played a major role in developing the RDF's operational capacity by providing formal instruction on advanced military tactics, techniques, and procedures.<sup>72</sup> Building from a rock solid foundation of individual and unit pride, the professionalization effort

succeeded in developing overall organizational confidence. By 2004, the RDF was becoming widely recognized as one of Africa's more capable forces.<sup>73</sup> This newly minted confidence and the unique history behind it would soon influence the RDF's involvement in the developing humanitarian crisis in the Sudan.

### *Heritage Makes a Good Peacekeeper*

In 2004, the RDF was the first country in the world to answer the African Union's (AU) call requesting a small peacekeeping force in Sudan. The unit was to be capable of protecting UN military observers monitoring a fragile cease-fire between government forces and various rebel groups in the Darfur region of Sudan. That August, a few hours after departing on an Antonov cargo transport out of Kigali, 150 RDF soldiers landed in Al Fashir, Sudan and became the first conventional peacekeeping forces deployed to the region. Although they received training and support for their mission from various sources, the key element that eventually brought them success was an ethos developed by an ancient warrior tradition, and honed by years of struggle. Since the first momentous deployment in 2004, the RDF consistently demonstrated expertise in peace support operations and assumed an increasingly significant role in the success of the now combined AU and UN mission in Sudan. From their initial deployment, RDF soldiers carried through on the promises made by now President Paul Kagame who noted that the RDF mandate would include the use of necessary force. "Our forces will not stand by and watch innocent civilians being hacked to death like the case was here in 1994," Kagame told the press ahead of the original deployment.<sup>74</sup> RDF actions quickly measured up to the President's comments in 2005 when rebels who attempted to seize

civilian supplies from a convoy under Rwandan guard, were treated to a costly gun battle that resulted in numerous rebel casualties and the loss of two RDF soldiers.<sup>75</sup>

Similar actions by RDF soldiers in the region quickly gave them a reputation among the various parties to the conflict as a professional force to be taken seriously. In recognition of this demonstrated strength, RDF contingents quickly found themselves responsible for more complex and sensitive missions in Sudan to include the security of the UN Mission Headquarters in Khartoum.<sup>76</sup> As of March 2008, there were close to 3,500 RDF soldiers deployed to the 26,000-man hybrid UN-AU force in Sudan. Among them, the overall Deputy Force Commander, MajGen Karenzi Karake and one of the three Sector Commanders (9,000 men), Bgen Dennis Rutaha, are both RDF officers.

When asked why the RDF has enjoyed so much success in a peacekeeping role, the Commandant of the RDF training academy at Gako, Colonel Sadik Kamili immediately pointed to the close bond between RDF soldiers and their officers, and to the overall bias for action that defines the RDF. He noted that the RDF treated peacekeeping operations the same as any other warfighting endeavor, adding that RDF soldiers deploy to Darfur prepared to kill, and more importantly to die, in support of their mission.<sup>77</sup> Judged against recent history, this frame of mind is unique among peacekeepers, and it underscores the tremendous influence that heritage has played in defining the RDF and what it stands for. The commanders of these forces understand all too well the social and spiritual consequences of failed peacekeeping efforts in their own country. RPA soldiers don't propose that their mere presence can avert crisis and bloodshed, but they are determined not to allow self-preservation or callous inaction determine the outcome of events under their control. As I was told by Colonel Kamili in his native Kinyarwanda,

*“wima igihugu amaraso, imbwa sikayanywera ubusa”* (when you deny your country blood, then the dogs take it for free). By their recent actions in Sudan, the RDF does not seem to distinguish between country and mission.

Another critical element to the RDF's recent peacekeeping success is the empowering role that the RDF philosophy of consensus has played in the often nebulous and frenzied peacekeeping environment. As mentioned previously, RDF decision-making is a consensus-based process that considers the experience and opinion of soldiers from every rank. Although RDF officers are responsible for selecting the final course of action for any given mission, the institutionalized consensus process generates a high degree of empowerment and situational awareness across the entire unit responsible for the mission. With this inclusive planning and the collective mission ownership that it produces, the RDF has consistently deployed peacekeeping units capable of initiating decisive and appropriate action at the very lowest levels of command; the very same skill that scholars suggest holds the key to peacekeeping success. One such scholar writes:

Whether they are peacekeeping, peace-enforcement, or counterinsurgency operations, because of the chaos that characterized these environments, small unit leadership becomes particularly important...senior leadership, therefore, must empower small unit leaders with significantly broader decision-making power than if they were acting in a conventional war type environment.<sup>78</sup>

It is this RDF ability to effortlessly transition between missions and thrive in the friction that lies between that should be of greatest interest to military professionals. In this respect, the RDF represents a professional military institution which has fully demonstrated the capacity to manage the broad spectrum of tactical challenges associated with the three-block war first addressed by former Marine Corps Commandant, General

## **Conclusion**

This thesis is an attempt to identify the origins and influences of the unique philosophy exhibited by the Rwandan Defense Forces. The examination is far too shallow and uninformed to be considered seminal, but its major points highlight the key influences that have shaped the RDF's modern evolution. With an exceptional history including warrior kingdoms, ethnic division, social deconstruction, civil war, and genocide, Rwanda's military consciousness has been forged in intense instability. The product of this turbulent evolution is an organizational ethos that forsakes hope for action and chance for skill.

The ethos has been shaped by a variety of historical influences, but most importantly by events that have occurred just within the last twenty years. The ancient warrior culture, which placed great value and responsibility on its soldiers no doubt serves as the foundational influence for the RDF, but it was the creation and deployment of the RPA to reclaim and reunite Rwanda, which forms the spiritual center of gravity within today's RDF. Drawing from those ancient values, the founding members of the RDF disciplined and empowered their soldiers to forcefully eliminate the elements of social destruction lingering from Rwanda's colonial past, and restore their homeland for the good of all Kinyarwanda speaking people. Throughout the difficulties faced during this struggle, the Rwandan military has managed to maintain immense pride and dignity. At the core of its success, observers have always been able to find officers who have lead their men with courage and compassion, and soldiers who have learned to strike boldly in

the face of adversity. The RDF has continued along its self-determined evolutionary course with extraordinary results. Today, it enjoys a reputation as one of Africa's most professional and formidable ground forces. And, thanks to its demonstrated poise and proficiency during recent peacekeeping missions in Sudan, the RDF's reputation is beginning to grow even beyond the African continent.

Even in the short period since the genocide capped the fractured colonial stage of Rwanda's history, the RDF has managed to re-establish the military as a national institution. Though the wounds of ethnic conflict are far from healed, the exemplary progress of the RDF has greatly assisted in restoring the military as a key source of unified Rwandan pride. In its rightful, historical place, the RDF truly represents a resilient guardian of Rwandan unity.

## *Glossary*

<b>AFDL</b>	Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of the Congo
<b>HPZ</b>	Humanitarian Protection Zone
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NRA</b>	National Resistance Army
<b>RDF</b>	Rwandan Defense Forces
<b>RDRC</b>	Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission
<b>RGF</b>	Rwandan Government Forces
<b>RPA</b>	Rwandan Patriotic Army
<b>RPF</b>	Rwandan Patriotic Front
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNAMIR</b>	United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda

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